

Message Text

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14

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 IO-13 L-03 CIAE-00 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9158

INFO USDAO CARACAS

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: MARR, PFOR, TD, US

SUBJECT: CLAIMS CONCERNING FORMER U.S. NAVAL BASE AT
CHAGUARAMAS

REF: PORT OF SPAIN A-9

1. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS A GROUP OF TRINIDADIAN CITIZENS, ORGANIZED AS THE "BACK TO CHAGUARAMAS ACTION COMMITTEE", HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (GOTT) RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE FORMER LAND OWNERS AND TENANTS WHO WERE DISPLACED WHEN THE U.S. NAVAL BASE ON THE CHAGUARAMAS PENINSULA WAS CONSTRUCTED. THE GOTL'S REPLY TO THE COMMITTEE HAS BEEN THAT ALL VALID CLAIMS FROM DISPOSSESSED PERSONS WERE SETTLED BY PAYMENTS MADE BY THE COLONIAL GOVERNMENT AT THE TIME.

2. THE COMMITTEE HAS NOW WRITTEN TO THE EMBASSY REQUESTING THE ASSISTANCE OF THE USG IN PURSUING ITS CLAIMS. THE EMBASSY HOPES TO AVOID BECOMING DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THIS CONTROVERSY AND PROPOSES TO TAKE THE POSITION THAT ANY PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE RELEASED AREAS AT CHAGUARAMAS ARE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CITIZENS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.

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3. HOWEVER, WE WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE AND ANY INFORMATION WHICH CAN BE PROVIDED ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

A. WAS ANY COMPENSATION PAID TO THE ORIGINAL OWNERS OF LAND OR OTHER PROPERTY ON CHAGUARAMAS BY THE USG UNDER PARAGRAPH 2 OF THE "TRINIDAD - UNITED STATES BASES LEASE" SIGNED APRIL 22, 1941?

B. WERE ANY AGREEMENTS MADE BETWEEN THE USG AND THE BRITISH OR TRINIDADIAN GOVERNMENTS CONCERNING THE DISPOSITION OF LAND WHICH WAS RELEASED FROM USE BY THE USG?

4. THE BACK TO CHAGUARAMAS ACTION COMMITTEE HAS ALSO WRITTEN TO THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION HERE AND THE HIGH COMMISSION HAS ASKED TO CONSULT REGARDING OUR REPSONSES FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF GUIDANCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT.

5. TEXT OF LETTER FROM ACTION COMMITTEE FOLLOWS: QUOTE

FOR THE PAST SIX YEARS THE ABOVE COMMITTEE, REPRESENTING THE FORMER LAND-OWNERS AND TENANTS OF THE NORTH WEST PENINSULA OF TRINIDAD, HAS BEEN MAKING REPRESENTATION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO HAVE THE QUESTION OF THEIR LEGAL AND MORAL RIGHTS RE-OPENED AND INVESTIGATED. THE GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO HAS REFUSED TO ENTERTAIN ANY SUCH PLEA.

AS A PARTY TO THE ORIGINAL 1941 ACQUISITION OF THIS AREA AND THE FORCED EVICTION OF ALL THE INHABITANTS WITHOUT COMPENSATION, WE ARE NOW TURNING TO YOUR GOVERNMENT, AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE.

WE QUESTION THE LEGALITY OF PUBLICLY ACQUIRED LAND BEING USED FOR OTHER PRUPOSES THAN THAT FOR WHICH IT WAS ORIGINALLY ACQUIRED ONCE SUCH PUBLIC USE HAS TERMINATED. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE ACCEPTED POLICY OF YOUR GOVERNMENT REGARDING THE DE-ACTIVATION OF ANY LAND COMMANDEERED FOR WAR OR DEFENCE PURPOSES HAS BEEN ONE OF FULL REINSTATEMENT OF FORMER OWNERS AND RESIDENTS. IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE THE FACT THAT NO COMPENSATION WAS PAID OR SOUGHT, DUE TO THE URGENCY AND SPEED OF THE 22ND APRIL 1941 ACQUISITION TOGETHER WITH THE PATRIOTISM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE DISPLACED PERSONS WHO WERE GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO RETURN AFTER THE DURATION OF HOSTILITIES, THE POIGNANCY OF THEIR PRESENT PREDICAMENT IS ALL THE MORE TRAGIC.

SINCE THE END OF WORLD WAR II, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO HAVE ACHIEVED INDEPENDENCE AND THE CONDITIONS OF THE LEASE OF THE NORTH WEST PENINSULA HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF A FURTHER AGREEMENT. BOTH OF THESE EVENTS HAVE NO DOUBT CHANGED THE

ACTUAL POSITIONS OF THE UK GOVERNMENT AND THE US GOVERNMENT
RESPECTIVELY TO THIS MATTER. WE IMAGINE, HOWEVER, THAT IN
ASSUMING ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS AREA, THE TRINIDAD AND
TOBAGO GOVERNMENT WOULD BE BOUND BY ANY OBLIGATION ORIGINALLY
BINDING THE FORMER PARTICIPANTS. WE WOULD OURSELVES INTERPRET
SUCH OBLIGATIONS AS BEING BOTH LEGAL AND MORAL. IT IS IN THIS
RESPECT THAT WE ARE WRITING TO YOU. WE RESPECTFULLY SUBMIT
THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT AND THE UK GOVERNMENT MUST STILL
ACCEPT A CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITY AND INTEREST IN THE
SATISFACTORY RE-SETTLEMENT AND/OR COMPENSATION OF ANY PERSONS
WHO HAVE SUFFERED BECAUSE OF THIS 1941 AGREEMENT.

WE THIS EARNESTLY REQUEST THAT A MEETING BE SET UP FOR OUR
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO FULLY APPRAISE YOU OF THEIR CASE IN THE
HOPE THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT MAY ADVISE AND/OR ASSIST IN THE
CORRECTION OF THIS INJUSTICE.

WE HAVE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF COPYING THIS LETTER TO THE
UNITED NATIONS REPRESENTATIVE IN TRINIDAD AND HAVE SENT A
SIMILAR LETTER TO THE UNITED KINGDOM HIGH COMMISSIONER. WE
REGRET VERY MUCH THAT OUR OWN GOVERNMENT HAS TURNED ITS BACK
ON US AND THAT WE HAVE NOW TO SEEK THE ASSISTANCE FROM OUTSIDE
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO. WE ARE CERTAIN THAT OUR CAUSE IS JUST
AND HAVING BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN A HEARING FROM OUR OWN
REPRESENTATIVES WE HAVE NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE THAN TO TAKE THIS
ACTION.

WE WOULD FURTHER REQUEST FROM YOUR GOVERNMENT, COPIES
OF ALL INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS APPERTAINING TO THIS MATTER
FROM THE ORIGINAL 27TH MARCH 1941 UK/US BASE LEASE AGREEMENT
ONWARDS. UNQUOTE
RICH

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